

## FY 2011 SSGT SELECTION BOARD COMPILED DEBRIEF

The Enlisted Career Counseling and Evaluation Unit (MMSB-50) provides a selection board questionnaire to every active duty enlisted promotion board, prior to the convening date of the board. This allows us to receive feedback from every board member to ensure we obtain as much detailed information as possible for this compiled debrief. We are then debriefed by all 21 board members at the adjournment of the board, at which time we go into more detail concerning various topics. This debrief is conducted in conjunction with MMPR and other MMSB personnel. The debrief gives our section an opportunity to distribute information concerning certain aspects of the board to enable Marines to be best prepared going into a future selection board. The information from these questionnaires are combined with details gathered in the board debrief. Afterwards, it is compiled into a selection board compilation debrief, such as this FY11 GySgt compiled debrief.

The compiled debrief results are posted to our official website and passed throughout the leadership of our Corps to ensure mass distribution to the Marines it will have an effect. The more details we collect from the questionnaires and final debrief offers Marines more information to act on.

These compiled debriefs provide a synopsis view of all of the board members answers to the specific questions posed. It is recommended Marines utilize the last several years SSGt selection board compiled debriefs consecutively to recognize the last several years' board members emphasis on certain aspects over others. This will give the Marine a more thorough understanding of the topics discussed.

If you have any additional questions you feel should be included in future questionnaires or in our promotion board debriefs, we ask that you let us know. You can reference the previous three Fiscal Year debriefs found on our section's webpage on the M&RA portal. Most of the questions stay the same; as they are pertinent across the board regardless of the rank of the board.

These promotion board compiled debriefs are also intended to be used in conjunction with our quarterly Enlisted Career Newsflash, newsletter, which can also be found on our sections official website. Having these two sources of information provided to Marines alleviates the amount of Marines being uninformed regarding career related information, in which, there is no excuse.

We ask that Senior Enlisted Advisors of active duty, enlisted career Marines, throughout every command in the Marine Corps, help us push this information down throughout every level of leadership. As leaders we are responsible to take care of our Marines and ensure that they are setup for success within their careers, but it is ultimately their responsibility to seek the information necessary to set them up for success.

These debrief results were compiled and completed by GySgt Robert Bell. If there are any questions concerning this debrief, please contact him directly at: [Robert.L.Bell@usmc.mil](mailto:Robert.L.Bell@usmc.mil) or MGySgt Randall Thompson (Head, Enlisted Career Counseling & Evaluation unit) at: [Randall.Thompson@usmc.mil](mailto:Randall.Thompson@usmc.mil).

**Semper Fidelis,  
Enlisted Career Counseling & Evaluation Unit**

FY-2011 STAFF SERGEANT SELECTION BOARD DE-BRIEF

**LETTERS:**

1. What type of letters to the board are the most helpful for the board members?  
(i.e. Letters of Explanation, Letters of Recommendation and Letters of Consideration)

**ANSWER** - Letters of Clarification that outlined a Marine taking responsibility for his/her actions or giving more details concerning adversity, without re-stating what was already seen in the fitness report, seemed to be the most helpful. Letters of Explanation concerning why the Marine has not completed the required annual training also seemed to be helpful.

Letters of Recommendations from individuals outside of a Marines chain of command, or outside of the reporting chain within the command (Commanders or Senior Enlisted Advisors) which had substantial information provided vice fluff, carried more weight than Letters of Recommendation from the current (or past) Reporting Senior's (RS) & Reviewing Officer's (RO).

Whether it is a letter of consideration or explanation from the Marine being boarded or someone else writing a letter of recommendation, one board member said it best by saying, "The Marine should leave all of the 'fluff' out of their letter. It distracts from their brief. Short, concise, and the point".

One board member summed it all up by saying, "There are letters that clarify why a Marine does not have current training scores. There are others that explained how a Marine may have faltered by receiving adverse material and then overcame the adversity by performing above and beyond. Considering a briefer had a limited amount of time for each candidate, it is not helpful to send a letter that is similar to an essay. Just make a point and be done".

2. What type of letters/material was not significant enough to send to the board?

**ANSWER** - "Generally any letter from the Marine where they talk about how much they want to be a SSgt seems a bit trite. The assumption is that they all want to be promoted". Also, letters from Marines that explain why they would make a great SSgt or are expressing a desire to be a Staff Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO) doesn't help when the Marines' record should already speak to this. These types of letters are just a waste of the board's time.

"Multiple letters from a Marine (typically) does more harm than good. In a few cases Marines wrote 3-4 letters to the board. Excess correspondence with the board wastes briefing time and casts the Marine in a bad light".

Most Letters of Recommendation, if the Marine had adversity in record, were not helpful. The board members can tell by the RS/RO comments, the Comparative Assessment and Relative Values (RV) if they tried to recover from adversity. "In some cases Marine(s) Reported On (MROs) seemed to send the wrong message and came off with an attitude, failed to take accountability for their actions or just winey. Some filled in adverse gaps i.e. adverse material that we had no visibility was even there". Admitting your guilt is understandable through the actions you've taken since the incident occurred. "Actions speak louder than words".

On this FY11 Staff Sergeant selection board, Letters of Recommendation from SSgt's obviously were not favorable to the board members. Other types of letters and material that the board members mentioned were not necessarily helpful to send to the board were:

- 1) Letters from retired Marines (unless they were a General Officer)
- 2) Multiple letters from lower ranking Officers/SNCO's
- 3) Previous RS/RO's (they should have said whatever they had to say on the fitness report)
- 4) Duplicates of awards and other items already in the record. "If a Marine was checking their MBS they would know that the information is already there".

**ADVERSITY:**

3. If a Marine had a DUI/DWI in record, was it recoverable and if so, what actions taken aided them in overcoming the adversity?

**ANSWER** - "DUI/DWI's (were) recoverable so long as the Marine had superior performance BEFORE the incident and AFTER for at least two to three years! DUI's carry a one year restriction for promotion once adjudicated, so two to three years of high performance in and out of the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) along with accepting responsibility, treatment if any was taken, and a letter from the Marine to the board owning up to it, (dramatically helped)".

Adversity in-grade takes on average 2-5 years to overcome; dependant on what the Marine has done since the incident. A Marine accepting responsibility on the rebuttal to an adverse fitness report or 6105 starts the recovery process. Also, proving to anyone on the outside looking in on your record that you haven't dropped your pack, but actually picked someone else's pack up and ran with it, also helps.

"Mainly, it took superior performance to overcome it. Too often in records reviewed after a DUI/DWI the performance marks were lack luster giving the impression the Marine gave up".

Most board members wanted to see how Marines performed on at least 2 years worth of fitness reports, and to see if a Marine elevated their performance, not just maintained the previous levels. "This was hard to do as most RS/RO's already seemed to write them off". Few actually showed gains immediately, some never. "The ones that stood out with a marked increase got credit where it was due". It also helps when the board members look at the RS & RO comments to see if the word pictures and the grades were better compared to before the incident.

"If an RS/RO commented with specifics vice general comments about how a Marine had recovered (without re-stating the adversity), that mattered (and helped make a better assessment)".

4. If a Marine had an incident of domestic violence (DV) in record, was it recoverable and if so, what did it take to overcome the adversity? Were there any DV cases that were considered as not recoverable?

**ANSWER** - Most board members agreed that it really depended on when the incident occurred and the seriousness (level) of the DV case. "This is a very touchy subject. It doesn't sit well with senior Marines (and is) a blatant demonstration of a serious lack in judgment and huge moral character flaw. It shows a negative effect in your personal life, while you're away on personal time".

If the Marine had an incident of DV in the record, it was unanimous that the level IV and V cases of DV were not recoverable. However, it was said even if the incident was a lesser level it was still very difficult to recover from, but with time and treatment it could be recoverable. "Overall, it still degrades the competitiveness of the Marine".

"DV was really hard to recover from if the male initiated physical contact. Classes helped some. In instances where the wife was cited as the one who initiated the incident, and the Marine was trying his best to minimize things, it was considered a lesser offense, but it was extremely difficult to determine. Also, in the beginning, I felt many, members, too include myself, didn't have the best understanding of different DV levels. In short order that was rectified by fellow board members".

"(The) only way to recover from it was if a very detailed explanation was provided from the Marine, his/her chain of command, the therapist/doctor that treated the Marine, and maybe even from the spouse/significant other".

**5. For Marines who were previously assigned to weight control/BCP, what demonstrated recovery?**

**ANSWER** - No follow on incidents of being out of standards is the first step in showing recovery. A one-time occurrence is forgivable. Also a continued improvement on personal appearance and physical fitness scores is advised. Maintaining body composition standards is a basic standard for all Marines.

Having a history of being out of height and weight standards is "unacceptable and is seriously frowned upon". One board member stated that in most cases, you could look at a Marine in this circumstance as a "burden on the command and really needs constant supervision".

"Being on recruiting duty is not an excuse to get fat".

"Marines previously assigned to weight control/BCP demonstrated recovery by demonstrating a high (1<sup>st</sup> class) PFT and CFT, and presenting a sharp, fit, military appearance in uniform staying well within the standards, and not being reassigned". All too often, the fitness report would be ADVERSE for BCP but not ran in MCTFS/3270.

"BCP within the past 3 years is very hard to recover from. A Marine being dropped from a school for exceeding standards is (typically) not recoverable". Marines who were within standards but looked fat in their picture became suspect. The Marine Corps has a Military Appearance Program (MAP) and not meeting appearance standards is a huge factor.

**6. For Marines who previously failed a PFT, what demonstrated recovery?**

**ANSWER** - Over 50% of the board members agreed that recovery was demonstrated with consecutively high 1<sup>st</sup> class PFT's with an explanation of acceptance of the deficiency on a rebuttal to the adverse fitness report or on a letter to the board. "Usually two or more high scores minimized the stigma of a failing PFT".

"A pattern of failure did not help a Marine recover at all. In the event that a failure was a one-time occurrence and if it wasn't recently, the Marine could recover by passing the PFT consistently and not failing again".

"A Marine should never fail at any physical performance tests, especially the PFT/CFT. Marines know what is expected and the expectation is mission accomplishment".

"The Marine cannot miss any more PFT's because each one is scrutinized. Failing the PFT/CFT demonstrates that the Marine is not even basically qualified to be a Marine, let alone a SNCO".

## **PHOTOGRAPHS:**

### **7. How did the board consider photographs not received?**

**ANSWER** - The majority of the board viewed Marines with no photo as being less competitive and as having something to hide; i.e. they were fat.

"Photographs, while not a requirement, set the stage for how the Marine's package was viewed. Especially if the height and weight were at or close to the maximum, it left too much unanswered in a board members mind on how the Marine looks? If they sent in a photo and they were overweight but (within) body fat (standards) and looked squared away with (good) PFT/CFT scores (and the all important performance) it helped. No photo was (an) automatic negative view". Marines that have a history of weight control can never help their case by not submitting a photo. "In some cases, the Marine could have been outstanding on paper, but without a photo, it leaves a bit of reservation".

"Uniformly it was frowned on. It demonstrated that the Marine didn't care about their (promotion and career) and they were too lazy to get a picture taken".

If a Marine had ever had a history of weight issues or had ever been assigned to the Body Composition Program (BCP), the board members agreed that it was critical to send in a RECENT photograph to show that you are currently within standards. This could mean the difference if a Marine needed that extra reinforcement from the board members to vote in their favor. If the picture is outdated or not even present it did give the board members room for speculation and too much doubt for a solid recommendation, from the very beginning.

"The only exception, (when) it wasn't viewed negatively was when it pertained to a combat wounded warrior".

### **8. What was considered a questionable photo and what was the board looking for when screening photographs?**

**ANSWER** - The board members looked at all aspects of the promotion photograph. In some cases, certain aspects raised "red flags" that automatically made the Marine suspect, which in some cases adversely affected the board members decision of the Marine for selection. "A Marine may be within standards but his appearance can still be poor. The picture is the one visual impression the board has. If the picture is poor or missing it sends the message that the Marine doesn't care".

Most of the board members went to the Section A of the fitness report to look for Height and Weight variations from report to report. If there were, then the photo was questioned. "There were a lot of Marines with fluctuating heights on their fitness reports. Those who had a history of weight control did not help their cases by allowing the height, weight, and body fat percentages to be so farfetched on their photo board. When a Marine looks overweight, 14% body fat is not going to appear legit". Photos where the Marine was clearly overweight with bulging buttons and trousers that were stretched taut were also usually the suspect photos. Any photo where the Marine was over their max weight and no body fat was listed on the information board was also questionable. If the Marine was considerably over weight, it would typically show in the uniform.

Proper wear of the uniform is also what a lot of the members tended to direct their focus to. "When looking at the promotion photos it was important that the Marines had their ribbons worn correctly (including devices and campaign stars), their uniform was ironed (and worn properly), and generally presented a good appearance". The board members were looking to ensure the Marine presented a neat and professional appearance. Poor quality photos were NOT considered to be the fault of the Marine.

Several board members commented on quite a few Marines not being at the proper Position of Attention (POA) and commented that "some Marines need to re-learn this". "If the Marine was not wearing their ribbons properly or if they were overly wrinkled, then the briefer or another board member would typically make a comment.

**Reporting Officials:**

**9. Was there any emphasis placed on duty preferences stated on fitness reports?**

**ANSWER** - "Little to none". "Very little, unless mentioned by the RS/RO in the sense of backing the Marine's preferences and stating such in their comments. Also, the statements from the RS/RO's not only back the preferences, but also strongly endorse the Marine's decision. Telling in comments they feel the Marine would serve well at a particular unit or possible 'B' billet".

Duty preferences are a good way to show board members that you have been trying to step out of your "comfort zone" and go on an SDA, especially when the Marine is not afforded the opportunity to. As stated above, the point would be driven home more if the RS or RO also mentions them in the Section I or K comments, endorsing the Marines decision.

**10. How much emphasis did the board place on billet description/billet accomplishments?**

**ANSWER** - The amount of emphasis the board placed on billet description/ billet accomplishments was overall "minimal to none". In some cases it was viewed, "favorable if it showed increasing responsibility".

"More attention was paid to this area when briefing the Aviation Occupational (Occ) fields and any MOS when specific certifications were needed to perform duties".

"Billets of a SNCO (such as); Platoon Sergeants, Chiefs, Company Gunnery Sergeant's, Senior Drill Instructors, (Detachment) Commanders, Plane Captain's, Collateral Duty Inspector's, etc... carried plenty of weight".

**11. How much weight was placed on the Relative Values (RV) and RAW Scores in assessing overall competitiveness?**

**ANSWER** - This was, "heavily considered. Most of the time even if all the remarks were stellar, if the Marine was rated below average or in the lower tier; they would typically get a no-vote. Sometimes the comments did not match the (attributes); in such instances it made the case weaker".

One board member summed up comments made by several board members, by stating that a lot was based off of them, "unless eschewed by (an) SDA, i.e. Recruiting (duty) where everyone nearly has an upside down RO Tree. To me it was a strong indicator of how they performed against their peers. (Most board members) compared the RV to the RS/RO comments and if there was a disparity, we went with the comments and briefed the disparity to everyone". It is also important to note that when talking about the Reporting Senior markings (attributes) and Relative Values, the Section I comments have to match the attributes and not the Relative Value. By comparing the RV markings and the comments, board members can see if a Marine is typically marked higher in RS profiles, across multiple reports with multiple RS's, as well as if the Section I comments are consistently breaking the Marine away from their peers, or not.

"It took a lot of search and compare to factor out. This allowed the briefer to focus on other important information used to develop the whole Marine for briefing and

subsequently, allowed the briefer to maximize a full display of the Marine's career during the 3 minutes (brief)".

It was not the end all be all but it was looked upon favorably when the reports held high values as compared with other Marines within a promoting MOS. In some cases it assisted in breaking a Marine out along with the comments.

"The assumption is that the RS' are managing their profiles and in general we were looking for above average Marines. If the bulk of their reports were in the upper third of the profiles they became very competitive".

12. How important was where the Marine was marked on the Reviewing Officer's Comparative Assessment, 'Christmas Tree', and how much weight did this have?

**ANSWER** - Most board members stated that "it was very important" and a "good initial indicator" of a Marines overall performance throughout their in-grade reports. It was a little more important when the Marine was an above or below average performer which helped board members break away the above average Marines and separate the below average performers. In this regards, the RO's Comparative Assessment played a big part in considering a Marines record for overall competitiveness amongst their peers. If they were consistently ranked low on the RO's tree it did not bode well, especially if the comments coincided with the below average marking. If the Marine was consistently breaking away from their peers it helped solidify the Marines case for possible selection, but it also depended on the briefer. "It is important to be ranked above your peers. The fewer Marines marked above you and with you, the better". One board member commented that, "This went hand in hand with the Relative Value (from the RS)... to give the board a really good look at how the RS/RO view the value of this particular Marine". The MBS as a whole was also used to augment both the RS and RO grading profiles and to visualize the trends.

13. How much weight was placed on the comments from the Reporting Senior/Reviewing Officer (in Section I & K) and what were the board members looking for in these comments?

**ANSWER** - The Section I & K (RS/RO) comments helped the board members by providing either a solid, positive and/or negative, word picture of the Marine. A word picture with glowing comments from both the RS/RO was huge. This solidified a Marine, whose record shows he's not only competitive, but has the complete confidence from his chain of command. "A lot of credence was put in RO comments. This was especially true if the RO was the continuity across periods when there were several short or multiple RS's".

Section I & K comments were looked at by the board members to see if they matched the markings. "Some cases had glowing remarks speaking of the Marines ability to operate independently of supervision, take care of Marines in their charge and accomplish all missions and tasking's with little to no supervision. But it would cause confusion if the markings were in the 'B' block and the comments said the Marine was the best Sergeant ever evaluated. The comments were the break out in those cases".

"The comments were more credible when coming from a senior officer with more fitness reports reviewed or written. We looked for comments that made a Marine stand out, such as: best Sgt in my charge, top 5% of all Sgt's I have ever observed, fire and forget, promote ahead of peers, etc".

14. How important was a promotion recommendation from the Reporting Senior and Reviewing Officer?

**ANSWER** - Several board members commented that if the RS and/or RO didn't provide a recommendation, chances were the Marine was more of a below average performer or just not that competitive. Another similar effect of an RS or RO not providing a recommendation was that the board would automatically have reservations about the Marine being briefed. More than likely in this situation, the board would not recommend this Marine for promotion.

"Promotion recommendations from the RS and RO were key to the Marines ability to handle the increase in responsibility. If the RS and RO gave an average 'promote with peers', or 'send to resident PME and retain' it was viewed negatively". It is important for Marines, especially RS and RO's, to understand the type of comments that the board members are seeing on other Marines' reports. When another Marine is getting "Promote ahead of peers at the first opportunity", and this Marine gets "Promote with peers" or "Promote when ready", these comments start to show a less competitive edge for Marines.

One board member stated, "If I saw 'highest recommendation for promotion' (comments), or 'enthusiastically recommend for promotion' over and over again then, with all other factors considered, I would typically cast a vote for that Marine. However, if there was not a promotion recommendation or if there were only 'promote' or 'recommend for promotion with peers' then that would make me scrutinize the record more and possibly cast a no-vote".

RS and RO's need to provide the best assessment of the Marine being boarded in their RS/RO comments. They do 'typically' have the best view of the Marine, vice board members who typically don't know the Marine from anyone else. If they feel the Marine should be promoted "Ahead of Peers", then they need to say it. If the Marine doesn't perform at a level that would rate such a recommendation, then it doesn't need to be given. Just because "Promote with Peers" is what they have been told to write in the past, as a standard cut and paste comment (check in the box), it doesn't help board members break individual Marines away from the next Marine.

**15. How was one or two line comments from the Reporting Senior/Reviewing Officer viewed?**

**ANSWER** - The unanimous response from board members was, "Negative". However, in certain cases, the content of what was written is what it really came down to". "If what they had to say was favorable, then we viewed it as laziness on the RS/RO's part. Usually it was on the standard comments written which was viewed as negative for the Marine". In some cases it was all that was needed to sum up substandard performance since it typically painted the picture of how well (or not) the Marine performed compared to their peers within that RS and RO's profiles.

Sometimes it was viewed as sending a message or a lack of effort on the part of the RS/RO. "It was situation dependant". If it was a canned school report it didn't matter. "You had to balance the RO tree and the comments and try to build whether it was warranted or not". "Either the RS/RO felt the Marine wasn't a performer or there's an underlying issue inside the command with regards to this Marine".

"Multiple lines of drivel cannot compare to one single line like, 'This Marine is a one-man task force', (actual fitrep comment) and it is all about the quality vice quantity when it comes to the remarks".

**16. When the Reporting Senior and Reviewing Officer's comments did not seem to match their markings, how was this viewed?**

**ANSWER** - Several board members commented that, if the markings were favorable and the comments didn't match, the board felt that possibly the RS/RO didn't really take the time to ensure the comments fit the marks. Or, if the markings weren't favorable and the comments were good, the board felt that the RS/RO may have a very mature profile. Either way, it warranted a deeper look into the why. In most cases, the benefit of the doubt would go to the MRO. One board member stated that it was, "situation dependent. By looking at the MBS, you could best depict the situation. When the RS didn't have a robust or flat profile, and the RO did, I went with the RO's comments. This was a complete judgment call that had to be made fast". Several other board members commented that, "it was more of a hit on the RS/RO", and that "the board members could pick up on that. But, it still raised a red flag and weakened the case for the Marine to get promoted". "It is hard to decipher which was more accurate, the marks or the comments. It only clouds the process, but we would err on the side of the MRO".

**17. How did the board view missing fitness reports/date gaps?**

**ANSWER** - The majority of the board members commented that they were looked at "unfavorably". Board members know that it is the Marines responsibility to ensure that the gap is rectified prior to the promotion board convening.

Gaps would depend on a case by case basis though, according to several board members. Those gaps that were only a month or two were one thing, but those that had long stretches of time lost credibility with the board and received lower grades. One board member commented, "If it was over a month, the Marine would be lucky to get recommended with reservation". This was also reiterated by a few other board members, which shows the importance of ensuring that missing reports and gaps in your record are filled, and complete.

"If it was their last AN report, it was pretty much a No-Go. Small 1 month gaps were mostly just an annoyance the Marine should have cleaned up. However, several small gaps were perceived negatively as the Marine should have made the effort to get them corrected or filled administratively".

Another board member stated, "They were typically viewed unfavorably, especially if it was recent. It sends the message that the Marine doesn't care about his record. If reports are missing then the board begins to question what the Marines performance during that period was like".

**WOUNDED WARRIORS / MEDICAL ISSUES:**

**18. Were there any issues concerning Wounded Warriors' records that may have made assessing their records and recommending them for promotion difficult?**

**ANSWER** - The more common response from board members was "Yes", there were issues concerning Wounded Warriors' records that made assessing their records for promotion difficult. Such things included, "Date Gaps and whether the injury was combat related or not".

One board member summed this answer up with the following response: "Wounded Warriors records were somewhat challenging as you had to dig in the record to see if they were combat wounded, or injured due to something else. Most of the combat wounded had comments on the Not-Observed reports from the Wounded Warrior Battalion (WWB) RS/RO's. Some cases would have no information as to why the Marine was assigned to the WWB, other than healing for injuries and attending all appointments. If a Marine was injured due to their misconduct it was not annotated in the record and that would (have) assist(ed) (us) greatly in recommending or not recommending a Marine for promotion. Knowing if the Marine was pending the outcome of a MED board would help.

And, anything speaking of the Marines ability to return to the fleet and their potential to serve would assist in piecing together whether the Marine was good for a recommendation or not".

Several board members stated that the fact that a Marine was wounded in combat or suffered a non-battle injury would make them more aware of a Marines situation. Many members also stated that if a Marine is currently in a patient status, it needs to be annotated on the fitness report in the duty assignment. Also, make sure that the record reflects the details needed to make a fair recommendation for promotion. This was commonly not seen. If the record does not clearly paint the picture of the situation, submit a letter to the board.

"Administratively, fitrep gaps were a big issue and seen several times. Next, it was difficult discerning if the injury was combat related or not unless there was a Purple Heart. If we could tell the injury happened in the line of duty that helped a lot. It doesn't have to be detailed or divulge PII. I know there were no physical requirements for selection, but feel most (board members) would want to know if a Marine was injured through on/off duty (conduct or misconduct) and sent to the WWB to recover as it's not fair. Combat wounded, to include TBI and PTSD, were afforded the highest opportunity for promotion".

19. In relation to ANY Marine with medical issues, was there any lack of information provided in the record or by the Marine, which left gaps of uncertainty for a proper recommendation?

**ANSWER** - One board member stated: "There is no excuse for a Marine or the Wounded Warrior Battalion (through the Marine submitting documentation of the details) not to communicate to the promotion board via a letter, filling in the blanks of date gaps (or other holes within the record not easily filled by someone on the outside looking in). If there's an explanation then it needs to be brought forth. If there isn't, then it leaves the board no choice but to (possibly) 'Not Recommend' the Marine for promotion". "We were left wondering on numerous occasions why PFT/CFT would be categorized as NMED. Without full information, we had to speculate and it was usually never good for a Marine".

There was generally a lack of information provided in the record or by the Marine. Many members suggested, "If the Marine is not medically qualified to complete the PFT/CFT (or any training qualifications), the record (fitness reports) should also note what the nature of the condition is, or the Marine should submit a letter of explanation". "If they include medical doctor's comments, make sure it is on the medical doctor's letter head for their office, if civilian, or unit letter head for military. Some cases would just have a plain letter from a military doctor and it left questions to the credibility of the letter as it was not on letter head". "Unduly long periods with no explanation or expected outcome were viewed as negative unless there was a letter from an accredited medical provider or at least a fitrep bullet. A letter from the Marine didn't help much if it wasn't substantiated independently".

"Missing a picture hurts. It is understandable that not all Wounded Warriors can or are willing to send in a picture, but when they do, regardless of their condition, it shows they care about getting promoted. They will lack performance records and basic training requirements while part of the Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR), but they need to do everything possible to help their record. When a Marine is wounded or transferred by service record, the RS needs to do a report. That is not always happening. The Marines with assistance from the WWR needs to get those reports. Marines who are wounded in combat were looked at differently then Marines who were in the WWR for other reasons. There was not enough information provided to establish why some Marines were being treated".

## **TRAINING:**

20. How did the board view Marines who have not been to the rifle and pistol range for a number of years?

**ANSWER** - Not being to a range in a number of years was viewed negatively. Especially, if there were no comments given by the RS and/or RO on fitness reports or from the Marine via a letter of explanation. The best case scenario would be that the RS comments on the Marine not firing with a Directed Comment, which would alleviate any speculation and need for a letter to be written by the Marine. In most cases duty station locations prevent qualification, but if there was time before the assignment to get to a range, especially before austere duty station locations, it was negative.

"This was a big point of contention at times. When we (collectively) knew there was opportunity, it was negative, especially for Infantry MOS's". Not qualifying in your T/O weapon for a number of years is highly frowned upon. Every Marine is a Rifleman first and with that said every Marine should fire their weapon. Marines with orders to a special duty should do whatever it takes to get re-qualified before executing those orders.

21. How much weight was placed on PFT/CFT scores when assessing overall competitiveness?

**ANSWER** - Across the board, PFT/CFT scores were heavily weighted when assessing the overall competitiveness of Marines. Low PFT/CFT scores (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class) were viewed as "unfavorable" and at times received a "no-vote" because of such scores. As one board member put it, "How can one lead junior Marines on a run when they themselves barely earned a 2nd class or worst a 3<sup>rd</sup> class PFT score". One board member mentioned, "Our SNCO's should not be running 2<sup>nd</sup> class anything".

"Low PFT/CFT scores were the reason some Marines were recommended with reservation". "PFT/CFT scores assisted in the overall break out of a Marine. 3<sup>rd</sup> class scores, while within standards were not looked upon as highly qualified. It was not the only thing considered but if BCP was ever an issue, or if failing a PFT/CFT ever occurred it was looked at harder, to see if the Marine overcame a previous deficiency".

"These scores demonstrate physical fitness. Which we all know, as Marines this is very important in our daily lives. Weak fitness scores are not competitive what-so-ever. Just like failing one of these, it isn't going to help you get promoted".

22. Did the RS explanation have any weight when a Marine had "NMED PFT/CFT" ran in MCTFS/3270, shown on their Master Brief Sheet (MBS) and on their fitness reports?

**ANSWER** - Directed Comments from the RS stating why a Marine was not medically qualified to run the PFT/CFT, and the NMED code was ran in 3270, "assisted in closing a gap or answering a question on a Marines record". One board member wrote: "as long as it didn't state underlying medical conditions and had specifics, breaking a Marines' confidentiality". "No comment and a zero score left the board members to assume the Marine was required and did not take it, which is adverse. Do not leave your career up to speculation".

"The RS explanation significantly helped when a Marine had NMED PFT/CFT reports. Without some sort of alibi for a NMED, it was hard to have confidence in a Marines physical ability which is something that is expected of a SSgt. Moreover, missing multiple PFT/CFT due to medical issues is not very favorable, but having an explanation did not leave the Marines career up to speculation".

23. How much weight was placed on the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) and what belt seemed to be the average for Sergeants?

ANSWER - One board member summed this answer up with the following response: "MCMAP was used to consider the whole Marine. The average belt was green and the higher belts you held, the higher qualified you were considered". As just stated, most board members commented that the average belt on this board seemed to be Green. "The minimum requirement for combat MOS's is green belt, but per the MCO, all other Marines just need a tan belt". It also depended on the MOS. "If a specific color of belt is the requirement per CMC guidance and the Marine doesn't have it and the board member briefing this Marine finds no explanation, it is not favorable". "It is truly unset for a Sergeant to have a tan belt. The average Sergeant had a green belt. The Sergeant should make it a personal goal to have the green belt as their minimum requirement", and do their best to break themselves away from their peers.

24. Was a Martial Arts Instructor (MAI) or Martial Arts Instructor Trainer (MAIT) qualification viewed differently? If so how?

ANSWER - "MAI qualifications were viewed as favorable because it demonstrated the Marines concern to go above and beyond expectations, even more if it was utilized. Negative connotation was made if it appeared that MAI was all the Marine was doing and detracted from their performance and/or proficiency in their MOS". "A MAI is a contributor to the overall success of a unit and demonstrated professional development as a Marine. However, if a Marine was a MAI and ran a 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> class PFT/CFT it was looked at as totally unsatisfactory". Several board members also commented that the board was looking for the 'whole Marine concept' to apply. Several members also mentioned that a good majority of MAI/MAIT's had higher performance and training qualifications. In regards to, "black belt instructor/trainers. This type of capability in a unit can really increase MCMAP readiness. He can make more Black/Green belt instructors." MAI/MAIT's need to make sure that they are documenting their achievements throughout the program within the Billet Accomplishments and Section I comments of their fitness reports to relay to the board members that they are not just holding the qualification in the sense of "I got the T-Shirt".

#### **EDUCATION:**

25. How much weight did the board attach to Non-Resident PME that was above minimum requirements?

ANSWER - A lot of emphasis was placed on Non-Resident PME which was above the minimum requirements because it showed the Marine went 'above and beyond the call of duty' to professionally develop themselves. "If the MOS was extremely competitive then it really became an issue. It then became a question of who has taken further professional development to the next level". A few board members mentioned that it was more noticeable for the Marines who didn't have additional PME than it was for the Marines who had the additional PME.

26. How much weight was given to having completed the SNCO Academy (SNCOA) Resident Sergeants' Course?

ANSWER - Completing Resident PME was definitely a positive, as "it would be a deciding factor for close MOS' on choosing to recommend for promotion or not, over another equal candidate, provided all other performance metrics were met or exceeded. The bottom line is Resident PME helps! It makes the Marine better". A Marine who attends

the SNCOA demonstrates he/she is professionally willing to develop themselves as a well-rounded leader of Marines, so it is obviously a plus to have it completed in your record.

"Completion of Sergeant's course was my deciding factor on ties for many Marines as to if they would be selected to my allocated amount of votes". When a Marine did not attend Sergeants course after 3+ years as a Sergeant it was not looked upon favorably; especially, when the Marine has had a history of being out of, or close to their height/weight standards. "Were they hiding something"? "A Marine who is recommended by their command and refused to attend is looked upon unfavorably".

27. How much weight was having completed an Infantry PME Equivalency course (i.e. Infantry Squad Leaders course, Machinegun Leaders course, Mortar Leaders course, Assault man Leaders course and the Tank Missile man Leaders course), being equivalent to the SNCOA Sergeants course?

ANSWER - It is important to note that the primary reason that the above listed Infantry advanced MOS courses are equivalent to the SNCOA Sergeant's course is to afford non-infantry Marines the ability to get a seat in the Sergeant's course. Every SNCOA has six classes per year and many of those individual classes still have empty seats at the end of the day at check in.

"When discussing ground MOS's, A Marine who attended one of the courses listed above was viewed favorably by the board for seeking self-improvement in their MOS. A Marine who attended his PME Equivalency course and the SNCOA was an extra bonus".

Several board members treated those courses as a definite. Since these courses are the infantry communities advanced MOS course, as any advanced MOS course does, it gives the Marine more MOS credibility and proficiency. Also, as PME equivalent, "it does demonstrate self and professional improvement and it made the Marine more competitive in comparison to his/her peers (that may not have completed such courses)".

"Those particular courses were very important when considering Marines (against their peers). I also think the Marines need to be around their peers in a leadership setting so they all can share knowledge".

28. How much weight was placed on advanced MOS schools in the Marines PMOS?

ANSWER - "A lot of weight was placed on these schools. If a Marine attended and did well, it separated him from his peers. If he attended and did poorly, then he was still separated from his peers but in a negative way". It's understood that sometimes it's not possible to get to these schools but "if there were two identical candidates and one had the school and one didn't, it was pretty obvious who was more competitive".

"Most board members briefed, as we got to the IMOS, insight on schools of importance or that produced AMOS's. These helped us look for them as pretty much a requirement to function as a SNCO in the IMOS. Having more was a big plus for them. Not having them was a negative".

29. How much weight was given to Marines who completed off duty education, such as college and trade schools?

ANSWER - "It was extremely important because it showed that a Marine was seeking self improvement on all levels". "Off duty education was a plus provided (that) their MOS performance was not negatively impacted. It added value to a Marines record but if

they did not have it, it did not hold them back either. It just made them higher qualified provided all other metrics were met". Off duty education helps demonstrate that the Marine is thinking of the future and investing in their future career. "Their maturity and self discipline speaks volumes and could be the last bit of competitive information that takes the Marine from a 4 to a 5". "Having the documentation in the OMPF and/or MBS made more of a difference than just having bullets in fitreps. I gave the real weight to hard documentation like transcripts and certificates. If the education related to their MOS, then that was even better".

#### **DUTY ASSIGNMENTS:**

30. What did the board define as MOS credibility and how was MOS credibility viewed in terms of competitiveness?

**ANSWER** - MOS credibility is always defined by different Marines, by a wide array of things. This board was pretty unanimous in what they considered MOS credibility and what specifically they were looking for; to advance the best and highly qualified Marines to the rank of SSgt. MOS credibility was basically defined as "achieving the necessary levels in career progression through schools, certifications, and billets. Ultimately, performance in key billets determined MOS credibility. A SNCO will have increased responsibility, lacking MOS credibility tells the board that the Marine is more likely to struggle as a SNCO because he is not proficient in his MOS". Also, performance in the MOS accomplishing the mission and showing the ability to take on increased billets and responsibility helped enhance overall MOS credibility in the MOS. Bloom where you are planted was a common theme when there was a lack of observation in MOS.

A Marine needed to perform in the PMOS, in and out of combat, ideally, depending on the MOS. "If a Marine did not have PMOS credibility there was reservations about him/her. A Marine may not have been as competitiveness than his/hers peers depending on time spent in his/her PMOS". "MOS credibility was very important. It was extremely important for those Marines who were currently working outside of their MOS. The board members were looking to see how competent the Marine was in their Occ field from the last observed report". "A Marine can still get promoted even with minimal MOS credibility, but, in order for that to happen; the Marine's performance needs to be solid before the MOS move and after. He/she needs to continue demonstrating that 'long ball hitter' capability".

31. How did the board view lack of observed time in PMOS?

**ANSWER** - This is a topic that a lot of Marines have different views on. As with other boards from past years, on this FY11 SSgt selection board, lack of observed time in the PMOS caused some board members to have "reservations" in giving Marines a favorable recommendation.

Some MOS's ONLY take Lat Movers. Regardless, the WHOLE Marine's career was taken into account. If he was a performer before the move and is continuing to perform in the new MOS with minimal MOS credibility, he's performing! Some board members viewed lack of observed time in a new MOS or serving on an SDA with no adverse material, favorably. If a Marine was serving as a BEQ manager, tool room NCO, gym NCOIC, or other non-MOS related collateral duties resulted in him/her being recommended with reservation. Filling these billets are not necessarily a bad thing as long as it is not for an extended period of time and the performance reflected on fitness reports is strong. "Bloom where you are planted".

One board member commented, "Although, if you did not have at least 6 months to a year of observed time operating in the new MOS it was viewed negatively as the performance

indicators would usually reflect the lack of skill in the MOS. If the RS and RO spoke of the Marines ability to operate above peers within a short time in a new MOS, it helped. If a Marine was covering a duty outside of their PMOS, as long as they had good performance indicators before they stepped out, they were considered favorably".

"In instances where there was just nothing to go off, most weren't likely getting selected. In MOS's where advanced qualifications are expected to be a SNCO, it was really touchy. For those who had at least some observed time in their old MOS, we could at least glean some feeling of how they may perform in their new MOS, yet that was no guarantee".

**32. How much weight was attached to 'Operational or Deployed' time?**

**ANSWER** - Operational or deployed time weighed heavily in the majority of the MOS' but there were some MOS' where it did not carry much weight such as the band, disbursing, admin, etc. However, if Marines were homesteading on I&I, school house or other non-deployable units it was not favorable. "This depended on the MOS and the briefer. For some briefers, it was the end all, be all. For others it was simply a factor briefed". It is recognized that not all Marines have the opportunity to deploy based on their MOS, but combat reports carry more weight positively than negatively. "It is a very important demonstration of performance. The Marine may be a rock star in garrison, but continued performance in a deployed or combat status and doing it well, shows a well rounded performer".

**33. How was a combat tour viewed in terms of competitiveness?**

**ANSWER** - "Combat tours were viewed favorably along with all other metrics". This was also MOS dependent as some MOS' don't get opportunities to go to combat. But, combat time was always looked for and briefed. The biggest thing related to combat deployments was performance while on a combat tour. An average performer in garrison who stepped it up in combat got noticed as long as they didn't drop back down afterwards. For Lat Movers, it helped a lot especially if they had a combat tour in their new IMOS, but just having one helps. "We have been at war for quite some time. If a Marine hasn't gone, it becomes questionable. However, there are MOS' that have a hard time deploying. Maybe the only way the Marine can go is by volunteering for an IA billet and the command allowing the Marine to go. It is a component of competitiveness".

However, adverse or substandard performance was also severely scrutinized especially if you were in a leadership position like a squad leader or section leader and were relieved in combat due to substandard performance. "It's best to have at least one combat tour when going into a promotion board than being briefed as having 'NONE'. Multiple combat tours were always favored (as long as the resulting fitreps were good). A surefire kiss of death was a low-scoring or lukewarm combat fitrep".

**34. How was observed time as the Assistant Family Readiness Officer (FRO), Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA), SACO, Remain behind element (RBE) SNCOIC or the SNCO College Degree Completion Program viewed? Was it possible to have too much time, if so what was considered too much?**

**ANSWER** - "Yes, it is possible (to have too much time spent in billets outside of your MOS). The board understands the problems plaguing our forces today. Op tempo is high. Marines in the rear or RBE may be wearing several hats that 10 yrs ago wouldn't even be considered for a Sgt back then. However, too much can be viewed as possible homesteading though". Time in collateral billets such as SACO, FRO and EOA were typically not viewed negatively unless the Marine hid out there and had not been in

their MOS for a while. RBE or Force generation element was not viewed negatively unless the Marine had adversity which prevented deploying with the unit. Medical issues were not given negative views unless misconduct in the line of duty. The precept took precedence in this regard as Marines are assigned a variety of billets in and out of their MOS'. Each case was "situation dependant. It showed some flexibility and enhanced trust. Members understand these positions have to be filled. Grow where you're planted applied unless, it was obvious that a trend of poor MOS performance led to the FAP". It is important to keep in mind that anything that keeps a Marine out of his MOS for a long period of time is not a good thing. Marines need to do their time in that billet and get back into the fight and perform in their MOS.

**35. How was a Special Duty Assignment viewed in terms of competitiveness?**

**ANSWER** - "Completion of a Special Duty made you highly qualified for promotion provided you did not have adverse material or were voided of the SDA. Performance in the PMOS before and after the SDA also helped. Per the precept you were highly qualified if you were on or completed an SDA". "An SDA can be a double-edged sword. Many Marines end up getting adversity on an SDA or they aren't high performers. That is almost always the kiss of death". Conversely, if a Marine had a successful completion of an SDA under their belt OR they were currently serving and doing well, then that would typically give them a bump up (against their peers).

One board member commented that SDA's were "always favorable, unless the Marine is doing horrible. Being a Recruiter, I think was the more demanding SDA. It was also the most damming. So if a Marine comes off an SDA intact, may or may not have done all that well, but regardless, he weathered the storm and received the ribbon. Then, the Marine has gone above and beyond. But if a Marine has done an SDA (successful), comes back to his MOS and prior to going on the SDA was an average to below average performer and now is pretty much the same (it doesn't help at all and tends to make the Marine less competitive). Also, requesting (on fitness report duty preferences) to go back out on another SDA in a very short period of time, gives reservations of the Marine's performance. It makes him look like he doesn't have what it takes to be a SNCO".

Another board member commented that, "small adversity was overlooked at times, if really minor (i.e. Recruiters w/ tickets or small car accidents and very minor SOP violations). Deliberate misconduct was a double negative. On MSG, anything that compromised security was a killer".

**36. How did the board look at Marines who were Relieved for Cause (RFC) on an SDA?**

**ANSWER** - As one board member put it, "As a negative, Marines adapt and overcome". As is always the case, having such a severe type of adversity in the record will take time to recover from. Performance as well as time and space away from the incident, to be able to show enough recovery by what you have done since, are crucial. One board member commented that it is, "not a career killer, but something that would require significant recovery from". Another board member mentioned that even with strong performance and time and space away from the incident, "They still won't be as competitive as others. The board feels the RFC is due to a Marine's individual actions or lack thereof". With this being said, Marines need to find anyway that they can to break their record away from others, and perform at a superior level than their peers, if they want to be promoted in the future. In some cases, the board members saw reports that were not marked adverse as their Transfer (TR) report, and others that would be. Reporting Officials need to ensure that the reports are marked appropriately and that the details of the transfer, typically earlier than a full tour, are explained so the board members can make the full assessment without having to speculate.

**37. How did the board view a Marine who was Relieved for "Good of the Service" (RFGS) on an SDA?**

**ANSWER** - The majority of the board members commented that RFGS were viewed as no harm no foul. However, most board members commented that if a Marine was RFGS, there should be justification in the record stating why. When there is no justification it results in the board members assuming why a Marine was RFGS. "Unlike Marines who were RFC, Marines who were RFGS were not viewed as negatively as long as a justifiable explanation was produced within the fitrep. In such cases, the board did not hold RFGS against the Marine. If there was no explanation given, it left the board members to assume the worst, and potentially hurt the Marine's consideration for promotion". "For example, a few Marines on Recruiting duty were RFGS and their last observed fitness report gave no insight as to what was the cause for the relief. If their section I comments were lukewarm or their RV and RO assessment was not high, the board thought the Marine did not perform". It typically wasn't held against them, but Marines in this situation need to ensure they had good MOS credibility and performance before and after their SDA time.

**38. How did the board view Marines who had served in joint billets?**

**ANSWER** - Many board members stated that it was generally looked at as favorable, whether the Marine volunteered or if the billet was just assigned, it demonstrated flexibility, maturity, professionalism, as well as extending performance outside of the box. One board member stated that, "performance was essential as you're the face of the Marine Corps. The hardest part was judging the RV of the fitreps. Even if sited by a Marine Officer, it was just tough as many reports fall into the NA blocks (with the RS having no profile)". Whether a Marine had ever served in a Joint billet or not, it wasn't something that necessarily broke someone out of the pack.

**AWARDS/RECOGNITION:**

**39. How were awards viewed?**

**a. Impact and End of Tour (EOT)?**

**ANSWER** - Most board members agreed that Impact awards carried more weight than EOT. "A Marine that received multiple impact awards for his performance in grade carried a lot more credibility". For the most part "it was considered to place a great deal of merit to a candidate's record (depending on the number and type of personal awards). However, if a Sgt did not have any awards, it was indicative of having just average or below average performance".

"All awards were briefed and much consideration was given to Impact and EOT awards in grade. The awards were another way to show that the Marine was proficient in their MOS or a capable leader".

"They were a definite positive. Impact awards meant more, but you had to look close at the award approval document (1650) to really see what it was. Some didn't have either block checked. Valor Awards sometimes the V gets dropped or added through the approval process".

**b. How were combat awards viewed?**

**ANSWER** - The majority of the board members commented that combat awards were the most favorable, "especially if they were for individual acts of valor or heroism. It really shows the board the extent of the Marine's level of courage and what they are willing to sacrifice for fellow Marine's, God, Country and Corps". Several board members also commented that, "Combat awards were viewed positively provided the performance indicators via the fitness report were positive".

"Combat awards, Air Medals or any award showing the Marine was a performer in combat was very favorable. Combat awards were the only awards that the briefer would take a small excerpt from to read during their 3 minute brief".

"Combat awards were huge; especially if there was a Combat V attached to the medal. Board members would summarize awards in order to highlight the candidates' outstanding or heroic performance".

**40. Was graduating as Honor, Distinguished Graduate or Gung Ho from MOS schools or SNCO Academies briefed or just the completion?**

**ANSWER** - "Almost always it was briefed and if it was missed by a briefer, it was always brought up by someone". In addition, it showed "exceptional performance" and "it is one more way for a Marine to distinguish himself from his peers". Any PME school Honor or Distinguished graduate carried a lot of weight. Peer awards like Gung Ho carried a lot of weight too. They all mattered greatly". Academic awards were important and any distinction such as Honor Grad or honor roll was briefed. It was frequently a deciding factor because it showed exceptional performance". Marines that graduated with honors were looked upon favorably. However, the primary goal is to complete the course without being disenrolled or receiving adverse material.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

**41. Was the MOS Road Maps or MOS Manual used in any way?**

**ANSWER** - The MOS Manual was used but most board members stated that there was minimal use. The MOS Manual was referenced prior to each MOS being briefed. A brief description of that specific MOS was read aloud to the board members. MOS Road Maps were not used. "The experience and knowledge amongst the members was diverse and provided valuable insight on enhanced MOS schools for 95% of the MOS's."

Another board member commented: "Not very much. MOS credibility matters and that is easily determined by the billets held and their duration. 'Bloom where you are planted' is key. More time in the MOS does matter".

**42. How were Marines with a large number of tattoos viewed?**

**ANSWER** - The majority of the board members were unanimous in saying that tattoos had, "very little (to no) bearing on the selection process". As long as the tattoos were within Marine Corps regulation and did not violate the order, "this was a non-issue". A few board members did comment that it would only be a slight issue "if it detracted from the professional image expected of all Marines".

"The policy has been in place for several years now and the majority of those Marines' records viewed with sleeve tattoos have the documentation in the record, so they know it may hinder their chance(s) at an (SDA) like Drill Instructor, Recruiter, or Marine Security Guard".

**43. What seemed to make a Marine really stand out from their peers?**

**ANSWER** - Break out comments by the RS and RO, to include accelerated fitreps. Comments that tell the board that a Marine is serving in a SNCO billet, or ranking him against his peers or against all the Sgt's the RS or RO has observed. "Extreme, favorable comments from both the RS & RO really quantify your existence and performance".

High marks and comments on the fitness reports were the number one item that board members mentioned that broke out a Marine from their peers.

"Performance (also) stood out from all the rest". Sustained superior performance on awards, annual training scores (current & high), Non-Resident PME to the next grade or higher, Resident PME completed, off duty education, MCMAP training, and challenging themselves on an independent Special Duty Assignment and having a successful tour.

"Advanced MOS Schools, MOS proficiency in and out of combat, excellence in combat-especially combat heroism by Non-Combat Arms Marines, several combat tours was beneficial along with perfect scores in training events".

**44. What were some of the biggest issues (trends) within the Sergeants' records reviewed that showed a lack of knowledge or preparation on the individual's part, prior to the board?**

**ANSWER** - This question was added on this year's compiled de-brief to give Marine leaders additional insight into what some of the most negative trends were on this year's SSgt selection board. This should be able to let them focus on these areas, along with others listed above, and allow the leader to take a more active approach in ensuring that their Marines are correcting any deficiencies in these areas for better chances of selection to the next higher grade.

Pictures: Marines need a current photo. An outdated photo was only slightly better than not having one at all. Leaving in a year old combat photo as proof of being there didn't help the board members. "We can see if they have been to combat".

PME: Marines have to get it done. Not being PME complete is an automatic disqualifier. "Way too many were PME incomplete". Fast promoting MOS' stood out as bigger offenders. "There were so many 5 or 6 Marines that we had to turn away because they did not have their Sgt Non-Resident completed. I am 100% certain that many of these well-qualified Marines simply did not know better. Very unfortunate". Having resident PME completed, but no non-resident complete, or recorded on record is not a good thing.

Date Gaps: Date Gaps were obviously an issue, especially if it covered the last Annual (AN) report. These were almost always perceived bad and briefed as such. Marines need to ensure they get them fixed in advance of the board.

Letters to the board: Only a small percentage actually helped the Marines case. The information on the letter needs to be relevant and timely. "A letter from a RS from 5 years ago doesn't help if they had adversity since". A letter from an NJPing officer who had meaningful observation afterwards did help some. Keep in mind that a current or past reporting official (RS/RO) writing a letter of recommendation on the Marines behalf usually doesn't bode well with board members, because if they had anything good to say they should have said it in the fitness report. There are those sometimes rare occasions, as listed above.

Awards: The 1650 (Personal Award recommendation write-up), citations and SOA need to be included within the OMPF. The actual certificate which the Marine should have been

awarded in formation should be included as well, but is not required. "We had to use the latest 1650 on many occasions to validate earlier awards that had none".

Additional areas of concern: Excessive additional information sent to the board was an issue. As quick as it is to get certificates in the OMPF nowadays, get it in. "Marines should only add information (sent to the board) if they don't see it in their OMPF in MOL. Duplicate information isn't desired or liked as it wastes time". "The lack of communication with the board. Not knowing that their training scores should be updated on their MBS. If it's not updated on their MBS, then the board does not have the updated scores. The number of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class PFTs were appalling. Even a very low 1<sup>st</sup> class PFT was briefed as 1<sup>st</sup> class. It gives the appearance that the Marine does not care about their career if they come in front of a board with a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> class PFT.

**45. What are your top recommendations for those Marines preparing themselves for a SNCO selection board, (The big take a ways)?**

**ANSWER** - This question is best reflected by seeing all of the board members answers. This seems to help see what may have been the most important to each of them and also gives some insight into some of the more particular examples of things that were seen by the board members individually. You will notice that the most important issues are reiterated by all of the board members, differently. They are listed below in no particular order:

Board member: NON-RESIDENT PME MUST BE COMPLETED! Accuracy of records to include all updated material of annual fitness report, photo, rifle, pistol, PFT, CFT, MCMAP, training rosters, and awards. Take responsibilities for your actions when your record presents adverse material whether you have submitted a rebuttal in the fitness report or attached to a 6105. If you fail a resident, MOS or advance MOS school ensure you do your best to get back. When a Marine does not redeem him/herself it is looked upon unfavorably. Know how to wear the uniform. Ensure your ribbons are in order, worn correctly, and not falling off. Please do not wear badges for your promotion photo and your belt tip is worn to the left. If you are deployed do not wear dirty, dingy, and a sweaty uniform. If your peers are looking squared away and you look the complete opposite then this will not be looked upon favorably. Remember it's all about competition. Remove your glasses when taking a promotion photo. Don't become complacent. Highly encourage a Marine to seek self-improvement personally and professionally by having an impact on the Corps and not just in his/her MOS. Awards. If a Marine does not complete the non-resident PME, but he/she was awarded the Navy Cross, Bronze Star (V) or any other personal decorations does not rate an alibi and will not be recommended for promotion.

Board member: MOL has your OMPF, so look at it with your SgtMaj, 1stSgt, MGySgt, MSgt, etc... to make sure all of your information is in there. Read the Promotion message to update your record and to make sure you are eligible. Review your records! Update them in accordance with the orders. Contact the career counselors two years out from the BELOW ZONE as this will give you time to correct deficiencies, speak with your RS on where you would fall in their profile if you do not know what their profile is you will not know how you compare with your peers until after your report has posted to your MBS and then it is too late to correct it. Realize while we are not zero defect, we will be drawing down and you have to perform no matter where you are assigned. If you make a mistake own up to it and move on demonstrating sustained superior performance. Do not be afraid to write a letter explaining why you have not fired the rifle, gone to Resident PME or did not run a full PFT if it is not covered already in your FITREPS. Take a damn photo and have someone go with you to look you over to make sure you are presenting your best image! Bottom line if you do not care about your record/career why should the board member care to prepare your package with the fullest enthusiasm that you will be an excellent recommendation for promotion. Leave it to chance and you may find yourself passed over and going home.

Board member: Make sure they are PME complete.

Board member: Everything matters. Verify your record and update training.

Board member: Have a current picture and do the best at whatever you are doing. Make the right choices and take on duties outside your MOS. This will make you the most competitive.

Board member: Know your RS and RO and ensure you receive fitrep counseling so you know expectations to succeed. Stay out of trouble. Stay fit and trim. Have an above average operational deployment (in-grade).

Board member: Marines need to review their OMPF & MBS to ensure that training is up to date, no date gaps on fitreps, and send in a letter of clarification or explanation on all incomplete annual training (PFT, CFT, and rifle range).

Board member: Performance and all training up to date.

Board member: Make sure not to get tied up into RV & RO numbers. Focus on comments. Perform, perform, and leave no room for why something is missing.

Board member: The list that was compiled for the top recommendations for Marines preparing themselves for a SNCO selection included: A current photo. Accurate and updated records. No date gaps. Completed annual training. Completed Resident PME. Clear letter of explanation for adversity. Ensure information in OMPF is updated and pertinent. Contact the career counselors two years out from the below zone in order to correct deficiencies, speak with your RS on where you would fall in their profile and to see how you compare with your peers.

Board member: Make sure that everything you can control is complete and up to date: picture, training requirements, fitreps, awards, training certificates... The second recommendation is that Marines need to focus on their MOS and building credibility, this includes attending resident PME.

Board member: 'B' billets, all fitreps and no gaps, updated picture, and if you had any adverse issues, a letter from SNM and ensure that it is well written.

Board member: Stay on top of your OMPF. Stress to Marines that they are responsible for the accuracy of their records but lets also ensure as SNCO's and Senior SNCO's that we are mentoring and advising our young Marines. Lets not make it only the Career Counselor's responsibility or 1stSgt's responsibility. Picture, PME, Fitreps (no date gaps), awards, education (certificates) and understanding RS and RO value/assessment. It's all important; otherwise it would not be briefable criteria.

Board member: No answer.

Board member: Have a current photo! Before it's taken make sure you have your SgtMaj inspect you. Get your uniform dry-cleaned. Review the ribbon chart. Make sure your CARs and PUCs are on correctly and that you're wearing the NATO ribbon you rate. Fix any date gaps or overlaps in your MBS. If the chronology is screwed up you need to contact your RS/RO's to get it fixed. With the MBS being available on MOL now it's only too easy to verify everything is correct. Also, make sure all your awards, certifications, etc are in your record. More is better! Get to the rifle range and make sure you have a current PFT and CFT. If you can't complete any of those, a notation in the fitrep is important.

Board member: Review your record and ensure it is accurate. Write a letter to the board to clarify anything that may be out of the ordinary for your case. Ensure all pertinent documentation is included in the OMPF.

Board member: Review OMPF thoroughly 1 year out and 1 month out. Complete PME. Perform wherever you are. Respond to adverse material with a letter to the board.

Board member: PME PME PME - Gaps - Observed time - Up to date training.

Board member: First and foremost submit an updated photo. If you have a history of weight issues or are close to your max weight, if at all possible, take your photo 60 to 90 days out. You want to ensure that the board members have no doubt as to what your personal appearance is at the time of the board. Ensure that your MBS and your records are updated.

Board member: Have all of their training up to date. If for whatever reason it is not up to date, provide a letter to the board explaining why. Ensure there are no date gaps in their fitreps. Communicate extenuating circumstances to the board. ALWAYS take responsibility for any wrong doing. Be humble. NEVER make excuses. Excuses were always a kiss of death. Have an updated, professional photo. DO NOT look bad in uniform or be overweight. Have a 1<sup>st</sup> class PFT/CFT and anything other than a tan belt. Rifle scores really don't matter as long as it's current. If they attend Sergeant's course, they better make sure they are not overweight and they can pass the PFT. Award citations and certificates should be in their file.

Board member: Check and double check your MBS & OMPF. Take a photo. Send clarification of anything that could be misunderstood.

**Semper Fidelis,  
Enlisted Career Counseling & Evaluation Unit  
Manpower Management Support Branch (MMSB)-50  
Headquarters, United States Marine Corps**